



Coaching

About this Topic: Coaching



Topic Mentor

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From her more than 20 years of extensive field work, Professor Linda A. Hill has helped managers create the conditions for effective management in today's flatter and increasingly diverse organizations. She is a professor and chair of the Leadership Initiative at Harvard Business School. She is also the author of the best-selling *Becoming a Manager* (Harvard Business School Press), now out in paperback. Linda served as the content expert for *Coaching for Results* and *Managing Direct Reports*, two award-winning interactive programs from Harvard Business School Publishing. She has also served as a mentor for many Harvard ManageMentor topics.

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Topic Source Notes

Learn

Harvard Business School Publishing. *Coaching*. The Interactive Manager™ Series. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 1997.

Harvard Business School Publishing. *Coaching and Mentoring*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004.

Steps

Harvard Business School Publishing. *Coaching*. The Interactive Manager™ Series. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 1997.

Harvard Business School Publishing. *Coaching and Mentoring*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004.

Tips

Harvard Business School Publishing. *Coaching*. The Interactive Manager™ Series. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 1997.

Harvard Business School Publishing. *Coaching and Mentoring*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004.

Tools

"The Supervisor: Coaching for Success." AT&T course, 1995.

Harvard Business School Publishing. *Coaching and Mentoring*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004.

What Would You Do?

What would you do?

Priya entered Carl's office in complete exasperation. She had been near to closing a few deals, and then at the last minute the deals fell through. She wondered what she was doing wrong. Carl suggested that she talk less during her sales calls, listen to the customers more, and avoid overwhelming them with too much product information. He assured her things would get better. A few weeks later, Priya was back in his office. She explained that she had done exactly what he suggested but she was still getting the same lousy results. Carl suspected he needed to take a different approach. But what else could he do to help Priya improve her performance?

What would you do?

Carl might want to listen in on a few of Priya's sales calls to better understand how she is interacting with her clients. Next, he might ask her some open-ended questions that encourage her to think critically about the situation and encourage her to propose her own solutions to the problem. Between the first-hand information he observes and the probing questions he asks, Carl will probably uncover where she might have taken a wrong turn. This will enable him to support Priya in finding a more productive path by offering her more informed, relevant, and timely advice.

In this topic, you will learn how to assess your coachees' ongoing performance, adapt your coaching style to their personalities, and help your coachees set goals and create action plans that will allow them to achieve their potential.

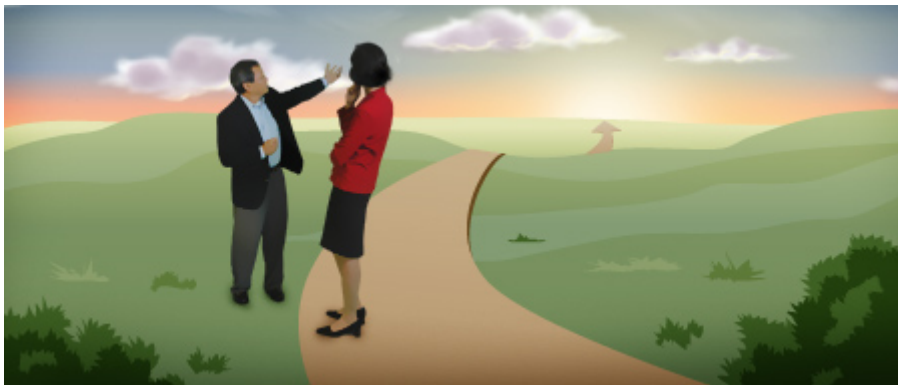
Oftentimes, managers make the mistake of trying to solve a problem in single coaching session. Coaching is an ongoing process that takes preparation, observation, communication, and follow up.

Topic Objectives

This topic helps you:

- Recognize that coaching is an ongoing, two-way process that takes place as the need or opportunity arises
- Implement a four-step process to prepare for and lead effective coaching sessions
- Conduct coaching sessions using a variety of coaching techniques
- Provide ongoing support and follow-through for the person being coached
- Strengthen your coaching skills

What is coaching?



Like any manager, you have a huge interest in developing your employees' capabilities. In most cases, this is accomplished through coaching. **Coaching** is an ongoing, two-way process in which a manager and direct report share knowledge and experience to maximize the direct report's potential and help him or her achieve agreed-upon goals. Coaching relies on collaboration and requires a positive, supportive emotional bond between coach and coachee.

Many people use the words **coaching** and **mentoring** interchangeably, but the two functions differ. Coaching focuses on immediate performance problems and learning opportunities, while mentoring emphasizes long-term personal career development. Moreover, while a coach is often the supervisor of the person being coached, a mentor is seldom the boss of the person being mentored. Finally, a coach directs the learning and instruction during the coaching process, while the mentored person takes charge of his or her own learning during the mentoring process.

Why coach?

“ You cannot teach a man anything.
You can only help him discover it
within himself. ”
–Galileo Galilei

Coaching generates numerous benefits for you and your company.

It's useful for:

- Overcoming costly and time-consuming performance problems

- Strengthening employees' skills so you can delegate more tasks to them and devote time to more important responsibilities—such as planning
- Boosting productivity by helping your employees work smarter
- Creating promotable direct reports who can step into your shoes as you advance up the career ladder
- Improving retention, because employees are more loyal and motivated when their boss takes time to help them improve their skills
- Fostering a positive work culture in the form of greater job satisfaction and higher motivation
- Making more effective use of company resources, because coaching costs less than formal training

Activity: How's your coaching?

Coaching an employee can benefit the manager, the employee, and the organization as a whole. What are the skills and qualities necessary for effective coaching? Your coaching skills might need improvement.

Evaluate your current effectiveness as a coach by answering Yes or No to the following questions. As you go along, manually keep track of how many correct answers you make.

Do you observe your direct reports' behavior?

☐ Yes

Correct choice. You prepare to coach by observing, to identify whether and how the employee's behavior negatively affects others or interferes with the employee's ability to succeed.

☐ No

Not the best choice. You prepare to coach by observing, to identify whether and how the employee's behavior negatively affects others or interferes with the employee's ability to succeed.

Do you form and test hypotheses about your direct reports' behavior before acting on them?

☐ Yes

Correct choice. From your observations, form a hypothesis about the performance problem, such as skill gaps or lack of knowledge, and its effect. Then test your hypothesis, perhaps by confidentially asking another manager to observe a situation, or by asking open-ended questions.

☐ No

Not the best choice. From your observations, form a hypothesis about the performance problem, such as skill gaps or lack of knowledge, and its effect. Then test your hypothesis, perhaps by confidentially asking another manager to observe a situation, or by asking open-ended questions.

Do you use your own performance as a yardstick to measure others?

☐ Yes

Not the best choice. Your own performance is not an appropriate measure. Instead, evaluate the unique strengths that individuals bring to a job.

☐ No

Correct choice. Your own performance is not an appropriate measure. Instead, evaluate the unique strengths that individuals bring to a job.

Do you prepare employees for coaching sessions in advance?

☐ Yes

Correct choice. Coaching is a partnership, so it's important to invite an employee to participate in the coaching process and to help them understand how the process will unfold.

☐ No

Not the best choice. Coaching is a partnership, so it's important to invite an employee to participate in the coaching process and to help them understand how the process will unfold.

Do you use open-ended questions to promote sharing of ideas and information?

☐ Yes

Correct choice. Open-ended questions (those that don't require merely a "yes" or "no" answer) encourage participation and generate ideas for addressing a performance problem or skills gap.

☐ No

Not the best choice. Open-ended questions (those that don't require merely a "yes" or "no" answer) encourage participation and generate ideas for addressing a performance problem or skills gap.

Do you blend inquiry (asking questions) with advocacy (offering opinions and ideas) during discussions with individuals you're coaching?

☐ Yes

Correct choice. While coaching, you rely extensively on inquiry—asking questions. But an over-reliance on inquiry can make coachees feel like they're being interrogated.

☐ No

Not the best choice. While coaching, you rely extensively on inquiry—asking questions. But an over-reliance on inquiry can make coachees feel like they're being interrogated.

Do you decide what approach is needed to solve the employee's problem?

☐ Yes

Not the best choice. Rather than mandate the solution, it's best to determine collaboratively where help is needed and what type of help would best address the performance problems or skill gaps.

☐ No

Correct choice. Rather than mandate the solution, it's best to determine collaboratively where help is needed and what type of help would best address the performance problems or skill gaps.

Do you work with your direct reports to reach agreement on desired goals and outcomes?

☐ Yes

Correct choice. Successful coaching requires agreement on goals.

☐ No

Not the best choice. Successful coaching requires agreement on goals.

Do you give feedback that focuses on behavior and its consequences (rather than on vague judgments)?

☐ Yes

Correct choice. During the coaching process, provide feedback regularly. The best feedback is specific. For example, you might say, "I liked the way you used visuals to illustrate the problem, and then invited people to comment on the timetable," rather than, "Great presentation."

☐ No

Not the best choice. During the coaching process, provide feedback regularly. The best feedback is specific. For example, you might say, "I liked the way you used visuals to illustrate the problem, and then invited people to comment on the timetable," rather than, "Great presentation."

Do you follow up on coaching discussions to make sure progress is proceeding as planned?

☐ Yes

Correct choice. It's important to periodically check progress and understanding with your direct report as the coaching process unfolds.

☐ No

Not the best choice. It's important to periodically check progress and understanding with your direct report as the coaching process unfolds.

How many of the previous assessment questions did you answer correctly?

☐ 0-3

Learning the fundamentals of coaching and practicing how to apply them will help you improve your performance as a manager. Review the suggestions for improvement beside each answer.

☐ 4-7

Your coaching skills can be improved by learning to follow a coaching process. Review the suggestions for improvement beside each answer.

☐ 8-10

You likely have most of the skills required to be an effective coach, and may just need to brush up on the coaching process. Review the suggestions for improvement beside each answer.

When should you coach?



Coaching is an ongoing process, taking place as the need or opportunity arises. Often, coaching occurs informally as you discuss goals, challenges, and on-the-job performance with employees while providing helpful feedback during day-to-day encounters.

At other times, the coaching process can be more focused and formal; you set up structured meetings with a coachee to establish goals and review progress.

Coaching also has a direct link to performance appraisal. Often, a manager offers to provide coaching for a direct report after a performance appraisal reveals a correctable problem or the need to develop particular skills essential for advancement.

Leadership Insight: The manager as coach

What people don't understand about coaching is it's not an extra thing, a separate thing to have to do in addition to what's probably already a really full plate. And they feel overwhelmed, because they already have so much to do. People are working harder. They have less resources. They're stressed. They're overwhelmed. And if they think, "I have to now coach my people on top of everything else," then they don't do it, because they think it's a separate thing.

It's not a separate thing. If you're managing your people correctly, coaching is a natural part of your one-on-one meetings. So that really leads me into the one-on-one meeting thing, because a lot of people don't take the time to have a face-to-face — one-on-one — meeting. And if it's a virtual team, you do it over the phone.

But you have to have at least 30 minutes or 20 minutes a week with each direct report. It's really important. And in those meetings, that's where you do your coaching. You're giving feedback, constructive feedback. You're giving them guidelines, guidance about how they're doing their job, their responsibilities. You're communicating your expectations.

That's where the coaching happens. It's part of your regular job. It's not something you do separately, OK? And coaching means giving support, giving feedback. It's allowing people to learn, to grow, to understand what they're doing well, and delivering what I call constructive feedback.

And if you ever call it negative feedback, I suggest striking that from your vocabulary. Replace negative feedback with the word "constructive." If I said to you, "I'm going to give you some negative feedback," immediately it puts you on the defense. It's like, OK, I'm going to get slammed.

But if you say, "I've got some constructive feedback that I think might be helpful," and you give them that feedback. And as you're coaching, ask questions. "Have you thought about such and such?" Or, "Help me understand why you made this choice, which might be the best thing, but I'm a little perplexed." Ask questions and give concrete feedback.

Don't just be global and say, "You know, you really need to be more detailed." You say, "In this part of the report, if you put some quantifiers, some numbers, some statistics, that would be really helpful. How about statistics about the number of people that are repeat clients? Put that in there." That will be more compelling. Give them specific information.

And in those one-on-one meetings, it's very important that you create a very supportive environment. You want to take the time to make them feel comfortable. It doesn't have to be a long meeting, but do things like meet with them at a conference table, sitting next to them, as opposed to across your desk.

Because when you're delivering feedback across the desk, it puts you in the role of kind of, "I'm the expert, I'm the boss." And it can be very intimidating for the other person, and then they shut down and don't hear the feedback.

So you want to make it comfortable. Always deliver what they're doing well first. Talk about, "This is what I really liked about this and you're doing a great job." And, "The things that I think could be improved upon are such and such."

So always deliver the positive first, and if it's really hard to come up with, just say, "I really appreciate the effort that you made here." Find something that you can tell them to make them feel good, especially if you've got some constructive feedback coming up after. It's really important.

But don't make coaching something as a separate burden that's going to overwhelm you. Integrate it into your day-to-day interactions with your direct reports. That's how you're going to get your coaching done.

To maximize the value of coaching, integrate it into your day-to-day interactions with your direct reports.

Lauren Mackler
Executive Coach, Consultant and Author

Lauren Mackler is an internationally renowned executive and life coach, bestselling author, and keynote speaker. Over the past 25 years she's been a psychotherapist, corporate executive, leader of Arthur Andersen's Human Capital consulting practice, and a leading authority in human behavior, leadership, and professional performance.

She's the author of the international bestseller "Solemate: Master the Art of Aloneness & Transform Your Life," and contributor to "Speaking of Success" with Stephen Covey, Ken Blanchard, and Jack Canfield.

Her work is frequently featured in the media, including CNN, FOX, the Wall Street Journal, the Huffington Post, the Daily Mail (London), the Boston Globe, and the Boston Business Journal. Contact Lauren at www.laurenmackler.com.

Whom should you coach?



Every situation in a manager's life presents opportunities for coaching.

Consider these examples:

- Herb is a talented market researcher but spends more of his time at his computer than in meetings with market planners and new product developers. His valuable findings aren't making their way into company plans, and his career is stalled.
- Claudia is a fast learner, works well with others, and understands the company's goals. You'd like to promote her, but her reluctance to confront difficult, argumentative people is holding her back.
- Tim is a smart and hardworking employee, and you'd like to delegate more challenging tasks to him so you can devote more time to planning. But Tim needs to acquire a few more skills to perform the tasks you'd like to delegate to him.
- Shirley, whom you recently promoted to supervisor, isn't delegating enough tasks to her subordinates; she's trying to do everything herself. Moreover, when she leads meetings with her team, the meetings end inconclusively and run overtime.

All of these situations are examples of employees who either have a performance problem or skills gap—both of which are ideal targets for coaching.

As an experienced manager, you have plenty of knowledge to share with each of these employees. But since you have limited time, it's best to invest it in coaching opportunities that will deliver the highest return. As illustrated in the examples above, these arise when:

- A new subordinate needs direction
- A direct report is almost ready for new responsibilities and needs just a bit more help
- A problem performer can be brought up to an acceptable level of work if he or she receives some guidance

But remember, because coaching is based on mutual agreement, it's not always the best way to handle certain performance problems. You need to intervene more directly when a staff member has clearly violated company policy or organizational values or performance remains flat despite multiple coaching sessions.

Key Idea: Four steps

Key Idea

The coaching process has four steps:

1. **Preparation:** You observe a potential coachee, test your hypotheses about his or her skills or performance, listen for signals that your help is needed, estimate the probability of improvement, and ask the employee to prepare for coaching.
2. **Initial discussion of skills and performance:** Share your observations with the potential coachee, ask questions and listen actively to his or her responses, and explore potential causes of the performance problem or the need for new skills. Next, agree on goals and create an action plan that will best address performance problems or close skill gaps.
3. **Ongoing dialogue:** Check your coachee's progress on the action plan, refine your approach, blend inquiry with advocacy, and give feedback.
4. **Follow up:** You regularly discuss what's working well and what isn't, and make any needed adjustments in the goals or the coaching process.

Effective coaches recognize that coaching is a process that has four discrete phases.

Key Idea: Observe behavior

Key Idea

Observe your employee's behavior both informally (for example, during a meeting) and formally (such as on joint sales calls). Learn what the person is doing well and not doing well, or what skills he or she has or needs.

In the case of performance problems, assess the impact of the person's behavior on others and on the employee's ability to achieve stated goals.

For example, during several team meetings, you notice that Priya repeatedly interrupts others. You wonder whether her behavior prevents others from expressing their views.

As you continue observing, avoid forming premature judgments about the employee's character. For example, instead of deciding that "Priya doesn't respect others," stick to the facts: "Priya interrupted three participants in the first meeting and five participants during the second meeting."

Discuss your observations with trusted colleagues, in confidence. If possible, ask them to observe the person in question.

For instance, invite a colleague to attend a meeting and observe Priya.

Observation is the key to accurately assessing your employee's strengths and weaknesses. Learn the best methods to observe without forming premature judgments.

Test hypotheses

“ The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer. ”
–Henry David Thoreau

Based on your observations, form hypotheses (theories) about what's going on. For instance, "Priya needs to learn when to speak up and when to listen to what others have to say."

But, as you form theories, ask yourself if you've done anything to cause or enable the problem behaviors you're observing. For example, consider these tendencies:

- **Unrealistic expectations.** Are you using your own performance as a yardstick to measure others? Assuming that others' strengths are the same as yours is unrealistic and unfair.
- **Inferring feelings.** Are you failing to identify with someone who's having a problem? Your anger or frustration may communicate itself to the employee and affect performance.
- **Failing to listen.** Have you missed signals that the person needs help? If you haven't listened carefully in the past, you may have passed up chances to help earlier.
- **Failing to praise.** Have you failed to compliment the employee on something he or she has done well? If so, the employee may lack the confidence or motivation to perform well.
- **Failing to model desirable behaviors.** Have you practiced the skills and behaviors that you expect of your employee? If not, the person may not realize how important certain behaviors (such as

listening) are.

Ask the colleague afterward to describe what he or she saw. These additional observations can help confirm or refute your conclusions.

Activity: How not to coach

Unproductive tendencies can make it difficult to coach effectively. Can you identify negative coaching behaviors?

Though Mindy has trouble closing sales, she is excellent at meeting prospective new customers. Her contact list is full of executive-level prospects with whom she has a positive working relationship. When Beverly meets with Mindy to coach her on her job performance, she tries to be as helpful as possible. She focuses on Mindy's challenges in closing sales, and says, "I realize this is hard for you. What are your thoughts about the situation?" Mindy looks upset.

Which negative coaching tendency did Beverly exhibit?

- ☐ Beverly did not show empathy.

Not the best choice. Beverly did show empathy, by saying, "I realize this is hard for you."

- ☐ Beverly failed to listen.

Not the best choice. Beverly did demonstrate a willingness to listen, when she asked Mindy, "What are your thoughts about the situation?"

- ☐ Beverly failed to praise.

Correct choice. Beverly failed to recognize Mindy's strengths and successes and to praise her for them. Remembering to praise is an important part of coaching.

Rafael works at a well-known bank. Before he was promoted to manager, he was a top credit analyst. The bank rarely lost money on clients for which Rafael approved loans. Now, as a manager, Rafael must coach Olivia, a former peer, who is demonstrating what Rafael considers to be questionable performance as a credit analyst. During a coaching session, Rafael expresses his appreciation for the areas where Olivia *has* progressed in her job. Then, to reassure her, he says, "The kind of performance I'm after *is* possible. When I was in your position, I could always spot the high-risk loan applicants." Olivia becomes quiet for the rest of the session.

Which negative coaching tendency did Rafael exhibit?

- ☐ Rafael had unrealistic expectations.

Correct choice. Rafael expected Olivia to have the same strengths as he does (credit analysis). He therefore missed the reasons behind her difficulty with the job, which may include a need for training.

- ☐ Rafael failed to model desirable behaviors.

Not the best choice. Rafael modeled high performance in this job area when he was a credit analyst in the same group as Olivia.

- ☐ Rafael failed to praise.

Not the best choice. Rafael did offer praise when he expressed appreciation for the areas where Olivia has progressed in her job.

Elise has been coaching her employee, Tran, to prepare him for a promotion. During a recent coaching session, Tran expresses qualms about taking on the new job. Elise says, "I understand that you're nervous. But I don't want you to think you have to deliver perfect performance the first day on the new job. There's no need to be worried about the new role."

Which negative coaching tendency did Elise exhibit?

- ☐ Elise had unrealistic expectations.

Not the best choice. When Elise said, "I don't want you to think you have to deliver perfect performance the first day on the new job," she let Tran know that she has realistic expectations.

- ☐ Elise failed to show empathy.

Not the best choice. Elise showed empathy when she said, "I understand that you're nervous."

- ☐ Elise failed to listen.

Correct choice. By saying "There's no need to be worried about the new role," Elise made it clear that she hadn't really listened to Tran's worries. When an employee expresses this sort of concern, the manager needs to provide coaching centered on building confidence or strengthening a particular skill.

Listen for signals

Gather additional information by listening for signals indicating the kind of coaching that may be needed. The table below provides examples.

Common Signals to Act On

If your employee says . . .	He or she may need help . . .
"I can't finish the project on time."	Managing time

"Maybe Ed should do this job."	Building confidence or strengthening a particular skill
"About that new job . . . I'm not really interested."	Preparing to take on greater responsibilities

Evaluate potential success

“ There is no use whatever trying to help people who do not help themselves. You cannot push anyone up a ladder unless he be willing to climb himself. ”
–Andrew Carnegie

Based on your observations and hypotheses, consider:

- **"Is the person willing and able to be helped?"** Coaching works only when the coachee willingly agrees to participate.
- **"Is the performance problem solvable?"** Some problems are so deeply ingrained that no amount of coaching can help. How do you identify such problems? Unproductive behavior—whether it's bossiness, competitiveness, or lack of self-confidence—that manifests itself frequently and in a wide variety of situations most likely can't be improved through coaching.

Prepare the employee

To prepare your direct report for coaching, have the person appraise his or her work performance. Ask:

- "To what extent have you achieved your goals?"
- "Which goals, if any, have you exceeded?"
- "Are there particular goals that you're currently struggling to achieve?"
- "What is preventing you from reaching your goals? Is it lack of training, resources, or direction from me?"

If the purpose of the coaching is to prepare someone for a new job or a higher level of responsibility, ask the person to compare his or her current competencies against those required by the new position or responsibility, and to identify any gaps.

Implementing these forms of self-appraisal has the following benefits:

- The employee plays an active role in the coaching experience.
- A tone of partnership is established.
- The employee becomes more open to feedback from you.
- You gain a new perspective on the person's work and reduce the risk of misjudging the situation.

Leadership Insight: Overcoming resistance to coaching

I have a story about an unsuccessful coaching engagement that I had about 20 years ago. And I still think about it because I learned some lessons from it. This engagement was with a high-potential female. I was really excited about it because I thought I could do great work here.

There were some warning signs that I should have known. One was that her manager wanted the coaching and [the coachee] was engaged but she wasn't really engaged. The second thing is that she wanted it private. She didn't want it public. She didn't want to talk about it, and that should have been a big red flag for me. But I didn't really focus on it, I was thinking about how cool this engagement was.

The next thing was the fact that she didn't want a 360. There was always something getting in the way — meaning I couldn't talk to her stakeholders, I couldn't work with the people around her. The last thing was that she was an expert, and it was very hard for her to be vulnerable and to try anything new. The engagement really didn't go anywhere.

What I learned out of this is, first of all, it is all about the client. It's not really about me, specifically. She needed to be ready. I should have been working with her boss, not with her, because the boss is the one who wanted the coaching.

The other thing was that she didn't want to be vulnerable. There's a paradox about vulnerability — if you make yourself vulnerable, you're invulnerable. She was not able to let people know that she was working on something. If she had been, it would have been much more successful for her. She would have had a support community around her.

Not being able to do 360, I wasn't able to help turn critics into coaches. When you do a 360, you ask for advice, you ask what your client could do differently, and you bring it back to your client consolidated. Your client can go back to her stakeholders and say, "I heard you, and here's what I'm trying" and you're actually able to turn the critics into coaches. That didn't happen.

So what I learned from this coaching engagement was first of all, the coachee needs to want to be coached, that it isn't about the coach, it isn't about what I'm doing as much as it's about partnering with somebody who really is ready and open to learn. The other thing that I learned is that clients have to be public. They have to say, "This is what's happening," otherwise you can't change the dynamic around them. So that's really important. I think the last thing that I felt was that you need to match energy for energy. My energy, in this particular situation, was so much greater than my client's energy, and it didn't work.

So when you're thinking about — and when I'm thinking about — coaching, I think about those things because they are prerequisites to success.

For a successful relationship, both coach and coachee need to be prepared. That means clearing away some roadblocks before the process starts.

Ellen Kumata
Managing Director, Cambria Consulting

Ellen Kumata, Cambria's Managing Director and leader of Cambria's Coaching practice, has over 20 years of experience working with Fortune 500 companies and aligning HR systems to support business strategies.

A recognized thought leader in executive coaching, Ellen has coached senior executives in prominent companies representing a wide variety of industries. Her clients include financial services management consulting, consumer products, insurance, manufacturing, publishing, and telecommunications companies, as well as NASA and other federal agencies.

Before joining Cambria, Ellen was a principal at Hay/McBer, where she managed large-scale human resource consulting engagements. She was previously a tenured associate professor of business law at California State University, Stanislaus, and an assistant professor of business law at Michigan State University.

Ellen holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Michigan, a J.D. from Wayne State University, and a Master of Science in industrial relations and personnel management from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Key Idea: Link observed behaviors to impact on others

Key Idea

When you meet with your employee to share what you've observed, discuss your observations of the employee's actual behaviors, instead of suppositions about his or her personal character or motives. Try to begin the coaching session with a positive observation and then focus on any constructive feedback you have to deliver.

For example: "Priya, I want to compliment you on your participation in last Tuesday's meeting. You clearly did your homework, as always. There's one area where your participation could be even more effective. Specifically, I noticed that you interrupted Tony before he could express his view. I've observed similar things in previous meetings."

Next, explain why the observed behavior is a problem. Cite its impact on group goals and on coworkers:

For example: "Priya, we didn't get a chance to hear Tony's contributions because you interrupted him. We need to hear from everyone to make the best decisions. And if one or two people dominate meetings, our team spirit may suffer."

Throughout this discussion, avoid stating supposed motives, such as "Your habit of interrupting others indicates that you want to dominate people," or "This behavior tells me you're not open to new ideas and that you don't like this type of work."

To affect a positive change in performance, cite the impact of your coachee's behaviors on group goals and coworkers. Listen as Priya receives feedback about her tendency to interrupt others.

Ask open-ended and closed questions



During the discussion, ask **open-ended questions** (those that don't require merely a "yes" or "no" answer) to encourage participation and generate ideas for addressing a performance problem or skills gap. Through this line of questioning you may be able to uncover the other person's views and deeper thoughts on the problem. This, in turn, will help you formulate better advice. Examples of open-ended questions include:

- "What would happen if ...?"
- "How do you feel about your progress to date?"
- "What are the major challenges with your on-the-job training?"
- "If you could replay that last sales presentation, what would you do differently?"
- "What do you think causes you not to share your views at team meetings?"

Ask **closed questions** (those requiring a "yes" or "no" response) to achieve the following:

- Focus the employee's response: "Are you satisfied with your progress?"
- Confirm what the person has said: "So, your big problem is scheduling your time?"
- Come to agreement: "Then we agree that your current skills will not take you to your career goals?"

Be an active listener



As you're asking questions, use **active listening** to remain tuned-in to the other person. Active listening requires you to show attentiveness by managing your verbal and nonverbal behavior. Not only are you actually listening, you *look* like you are.

The hallmarks of active listening are:

- Maintaining eye contact
- Smiling at appropriate moments

- Avoiding distractions
- Taking notes when necessary
- Controlling fidgeting and other distracting body language
- Listening first and evaluating later
- Never interrupting except to ask for clarification
- Occasionally repeating what you've heard to confirm your understanding

Activity: Correct bad listening behavior

Managers who practice active listening use both non-verbal and verbal cues to demonstrate their attentiveness.

Carl, your manager, does not appear to be listening to your concerns. He tends to look away, tap his pen, and check his email while speaking with you.

Which of the following will *not* improve Carl's listening behaviors?

- ☐ Avoiding distractions

Not the best choice. You *would* want Carl remove distractions to improve his listening skills.

- ☐ Maintaining eye contact

Not the best choice. You *would* want Carl to maintain eye contact to improve his listening skills.

- ☐ Restating each point made

Correct choice. Excessive restatement can seem insincere and would not be the best choice to improve Carl's listening behaviors.

- ☐ Controlling fidgeting

Correct choice. You *would* want Carl to control fidgeting to improve his listening skills.

Discern emotions

While you question and listen actively, be alert to the emotions behind your employee's words—such as discomfort with conflict, worry about being seen as incompetent, or fear of failing. Detecting emotions is difficult but essential. Why? Emotions suggest the kind of support a person needs most from you.

Emotions and Responses

Consider saying . . .

If your employee is feeling . . .	
A lack of self-confidence	"You have the best intuitive sense of design in our department. If anyone can learn this, you can."
Afraid of the consequences of failure	"I think you should try this. Yes, it's risky, but if it doesn't work, you'll always have a place on my team."
Uncomfortable with conflict	"Try speaking up during the meeting. Howard won't like it; he disagrees. But that's his problem, not yours. And we need healthy debate to make the best decisions as a team."

Identify problems and skill gaps

After discerning your employee's emotions, move the discussion to the causes of underlying performance problems and ways to close skill gaps. Ask questions that give the person the first opportunity to offer ideas: "If you're falling short of your goal, what do you think the reasons are?" or "What would help you learn how to delegate better in order to prepare for your new managerial role?"

If you don't hear a thoughtful reply, ask further questions: "Could the problem be that you need more training? Are there too many distractions in the office?" or "What do you think of taking that workshop on delegating that's coming up next month?"

Agree on goals

Successful coaching requires agreement on goals. Meet with your employee to:

- Revisit earlier discussions about goals
- Confirm the coaching goal
- State the benefits of attaining the goal
- Ask for formal agreement on the goal

Communicating Goals

Coaching Dialogue	Function
"Lynn, I'm glad we could talk more about delegating."	Revisits earlier discussion.
"When you learn to delegate, you get your managerial work done on time. You also help your employees develop their skills."	States benefits of achieving goal.
"Can we agree to meet an hour each week to review your progress on delegating? You mentioned wanting to delegate three tasks to your team."	Confirms definition of the goal.
"Are we in agreement, then, that our coaching goal is to help you delegate better?"	Asks for formal agreement on the goal.

Create an action plan

Small goals, such as fixing a spreadsheet error, can be achieved with on-the-spot coaching and don't require an action plan. But larger goals—such as helping an employee master a skill needed for a new role—require a plan. An action plan is most effective if proposed by the coachee.

Components of a Coaching Action Plan

Action Plan Component	Example
Statement of the performance problem or skills gap	Priya routinely interrupts others during meetings.

Statement of goals	To learn how to allow others to express their views.
Actions to be taken/Measures of success	<p>1. Refrain from interrupting others during meetings/Measured by no interruptions observed during two successive meetings.</p> <p>2. Listen carefully to others' views; respond with questions, not speeches/Measured by number of follow-up questions asked.</p>
Timetable	Action #1 progress reviewed by February 15; Action #2, by April 15.
Coach's role	Coach will comment on progress after each meeting.

Cultivate an emotional bond



During ongoing coaching sessions, you and your direct report meet to discuss job performance or needed skills in more detail. Prepare for each session by agreeing on the desired outcome of the meeting and the topics you both wish to cover. During the sessions, remember that coaching is a partnership and requires a positive emotional bond. Cultivate that bond by:

- Keeping the tone positive
- Focusing on the opportunity for personal development
- Demonstrating your sincerity in wanting to help

- Sharing your advice, suggestions, and observations, and listening to the other person's responses and ideas
- Strengthening agreement on desired outcomes
- Gaining the coachee's agreement to create an action plan
- Setting up a follow-up date to review progress

Customize your coaching approach

There are two coaching approaches—**directive** (showing or telling the other person what to do) and **supportive** (acting as a facilitator or a guide). The table below suggests uses for each approach and provides examples.

Once you've had an initial conversation with your coachee, you might change approaches depending on your coachee's issues and needs. But whichever approach you're using predominantly, reassure the person that discussing mistakes or shortcomings with you during coaching will not be reflected negatively in his or her performance review. You'll build a strong foundation of trust, which is essential for successful coaching.

Directive versus Supportive Approaches

Approach	Uses	Example
Directive	Developing skills	Training a new employee who needs to develop skills in your area of expertise
	Providing answers	Explaining the company's strategy to a new direct report
	Instructing	Conducting a sales call with an employee to demonstrate how it's done
Supportive	Facilitating problem solving	Helping a direct report find his or her own solution to a problem

	Building confidence	Expressing belief that an employee can find the solution
	Encouraging self-directed learning	Letting a direct report with new responsibilities learn on the job and make mistakes
	Serving as a resource	Providing information or contacts to help an individual solve problems

Activity: Directive vs. supportive coaching

Directive and supportive coaching each have their place in a coach's toolkit. It is important to understand the characteristics of each approach. Can you recognize the differences between directive and supportive coaching?

Directive and supportive coaching each have their place in a coach's toolkit. Read each coaching example, and then decide if the approach is directive or supportive.

Providing an organizational chart that will help an individual know who to call for various needs.

☐ Supportive

Correct choice. You are acting as a facilitator or a guide by providing a resource.

☐ Directive

Not the best choice. "Supportive" is the correct choice, as you are acting as a facilitator or a guide by providing a resource.

Running a sample report with an employee to demonstrate how it's done.

☐ Supportive

Not the best choice. "Directive" is the correct choice, as you are showing or telling the other person what to do.

- ☐ Directive

Correct choice. You are showing or telling the other person what to do.

Expressing belief that an employee will be able to handle managing a new team.

- ☐ Supportive

Correct choice. You are acting as a facilitator or guide by expressing your confidence in the employee's capabilities.

- ☐ Directive

Not the best choice. "Supportive" is the correct choice, as you are acting as a facilitator or guide by expressing your confidence in the employee's capabilities.

Explaining that the company plans to reduce operating expenses through a new process.

- ☐ Supportive

Not the best choice. "Directive" is the correct choice as you are explaining a company strategy to the person.

- ☐ Directive

Correct choice.

You are explaining a company strategy to the person.

Letting an employee find his or her own solution to a time-management problem.

- ☐ Supportive

Correct choice. You are acting as a facilitator or guide by allowing the employee to find his or her own solution.

- ☐ Directive

Not the best choice. "Supportive" is the correct choice, as you are acting as a facilitator or guide by allowing the employee to find his or her own solution.

Blend inquiry and advocacy

While coaching, you rely extensively on **inquiry**, or asking questions. But an over-reliance on inquiry can make coachees feel like they're being interrogated. As a result, they may withhold important information and their viewpoints. For that reason, incorporate **advocacy**—offering your ideas and advice.

The best coaches advocate in such a way that their coachees can hear their ideas, respond to them, and consider their value. To advocate effectively:

- Present an idea in neutral terms.
- State your opinion—your interpretation of what you have observed.
- Make the thoughts behind your ideas and advice explicit.
- Share your own experiences if they might help.
- Encourage the other person to provide his or her perspective.

Here's an example: "Joe, I'd like you to consider taking that workshop on public speaking. I think it could help you work toward your goal of delivering compelling presentations to the sales force. When I started out, I found this training very helpful. I'm wondering what you think of giving the workshop a try."

Leadership Insight: Open to learning

I had the privilege of working with a global manufacturing company, along with my firm, Cambria, to help implement a major strategic initiative. This organization was moving into the BRIC countries, and they're a very U.S. centric organization, and they needed to think about things differently.

They needed to be open, and they needed to really model that from the very top of the organization. So the CEO decided that he wanted to work with me and my team as coaches, for himself and for the senior team.

And when we first started working, he made this huge effort to see me before a certain date. I mean, we had to kind of do all these machinations with calendars. And the reason why he wanted to do it is he wanted to stand up in front of his global 500 leaders and say that he had a coach, and to talk about the fact that he was learning, that the whole organization needed to learn, and that he was starting and he had a coach and he had met with his coach.

And what ended up happening is that he and I worked together for about two years, along with the senior team. The senior team all got coaches. And he asked everybody to learn how to be open. And this was not something that this organization had ever done. They had never had coaches in this way, they had never done it at the top of the organization, and they never had 360 feedback and open comments about what people could learn and how they could grow.

What he did, which was amazing, I think, was he continued to reference me in terms of the coaching. He went to his senior team and talked about what his strengths were from his feedback and what his development areas were. He immediately put in place a couple of things that were important to his direct reports. He also worked on things that were difficult for him.

He would say, "I'm not good at this. I need your help. I'd like to be able to do this better. Tell me if I'm doing this better." And he would try different things. All of this led to, for this particular organization, an amazing openness and cultural change, which was noted by the board. And I was privileged to be part of it.

By embracing the coaching process and demonstrating commitment to their own professional development, leaders can open the dialogue for learning within the organization.

Ellen Kumata

Managing Director, Cambria Consulting

Ellen Kumata, Cambria's Managing Director and leader of Cambria's Coaching practice, has over 20 years of experience working with Fortune 500 companies and aligning HR systems to support business strategies.

A recognized thought leader in executive coaching, Ellen has coached senior executives in prominent companies representing a wide variety of industries. Her clients include financial services management consulting, consumer products, insurance, manufacturing, publishing, and telecommunications companies, as well as NASA and other federal agencies. Before joining Cambria, Ellen was a principal at Hay/McBer, where she managed large-scale human resource consulting engagements.

She was previously a tenured associate professor of business law at California State University, Stanislaus, and an assistant professor of business law at Michigan State University. Ellen holds a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Michigan, a J.D. from Wayne State University, and a Master of Science in industrial relations and personnel management from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Give feedback regularly and be specific

During the coaching process, provide feedback regularly. The best feedback is specific.

For example, to provide **positive feedback** on a presentation, say, "I liked the way you finished with a demonstration that explained the technology," *not* "You did a great job with the demonstration."

Likewise, try to address specific details when delivering negative feedback.

For example, to provide **negative feedback** on a presentation, say, "You showed that the prototype worked, but I wasn't clear on the technical challenges we're facing. Let's work on clarifying those," *not* "The audience was confused."

Check progress



Effective coaching includes follow-up, whereby you periodically check progress and understanding with your direct report as the coaching process unfolds. Following up gives you an opportunity to:

- Encourage continued improvement in your coachee
- Reinforce mastery of new skills and behaviors
- Discourage regression (reverting to original problematic behavior)

Ask questions, pose challenges

To follow up with your coachee, consider asking him or her what has been going well and what could be improved upon after each coaching session. Augment these questions with challenges designed to encourage your coachee to demonstrate his or her new skills or knowledge.

For example, suppose you're helping Alex, an employee, strengthen his presentation skills. You might follow up an initial coaching session with Alex by saying something like, "Last week we reviewed a software program that makes presentations more compelling. Have you made any progress learning how to use the software?"

If Alex says yes, you could challenge him by asking him to create a sample presentation using market data on one of your company's products. Provide him with the raw data and ask him to develop a set of pie and bar charts using the presentation software. Pose the challenge in the following manner: "Let's work together using the presentation software to see what you can do with this market data. Prepare some pie and bar charts—just as you would if you were preparing a presentation for our marketing group."

If the resulting presentation contains problems, you could practice some on-the-spot feedback to help Alex fix any errors and continue learning.

Sessions like these give you opportunities to check your coachee's progress, praise him or her for achievements, and spot signals that continued coaching and feedback are needed.

Following up also helps you identify ways in which the coaching action plan might need to be changed.

For example, you might realize that you need to review your employee's progress more frequently than you originally anticipated. Or maybe you decide that your coachee might have more success if you broke a daunting challenge into smaller, more manageable pieces.

Be systematic about following up

Follow-up is most effective if you approach it systematically. Consider these ideas:

- **Set dates for follow-up discussions.** Many coaches plan to hold follow-up discussions several days or a week after a coaching session.
- **Regularly review the progress your coachee has made to date.** Ask him or her to demonstrate new skills if the purpose of the coaching is to prepare the person for new job responsibilities. If your employee is having trouble mastering a new skill or changing a behavior, ask what he or she needs from you to make more progress.
- **Continue to observe your direct report's performance and behavior.** If you're striving to correct an unproductive behavior, for instance, objectively assess whether the behavior has improved or worsened over time. Express concerns promptly, and ask what the person needs from you to stay on a track of continuous improvement.
- **Continue to practice active listening with your coachee.** As you follow up with questions and discussions, demonstrate interest, support, and focus. Listen carefully before offering responses or ideas.
- **Continually enhance the action plan.** Identify possible modifications to the action plan and implement them promptly. Review the results of any changes to see if additional modifications would be useful.
- **Improve the coaching process.** Periodically ask what has worked well in the coaching process itself and how the process could be improved. For instance, do you and your coachee need to meet more or less frequently? Do you need to use a more directive or more supportive coaching style than you originally assumed?

Invest your coaching time and energy wisely



You have only so much time and energy to devote to all your managerial responsibilities—including coaching. To make the most of those limited resources, be judicious in how much of them you allocate to coaching. These guidelines can help:

- **Know when to coach and when not to coach.** If an employee is completely unaware of a behavior or performance problem, coaching at this juncture may not be the best use of your time.

For example, if one of your direct reports writes wordy, hard-to-read reports but isn't aware that this is a problem, it might make more sense to raise the issue with the person and then give him or her an opportunity to address it independently. If the individual fails to take corrective actions, coaching may then be necessary.

- **Delegate coaching when possible.** Some coaching situations may be candidates for delegation.

For instance, a peer or another employee in your group may be able to provide more expertise or better coaching than you can for a particular performance problem or skills gap. If so, consider delegating—you'll conserve your time and energy, provide a

developmental opportunity to the delegated coach, and help the employee in question improve.

To illustrate, if a direct report wants to learn how to write better technical reports, ask a technical writer on your staff if she would like to coach him. If you choose to delegate coaching, however, ensure that the delegated coach assumes responsibility for the outcome.

Key Idea: Evaluating vs. coaching

Key Idea

Managers often feel a tension between their roles of evaluator and coach. The two roles are actually interrelated. As evaluator, you review performance. As coach, you look for ways to help others grow and improve. This combination can be difficult for your coachees: Direct reports may be hesitant to bring up mistakes or shortcomings with you for fear it will affect their performance evaluations. If enough of your direct reports feel this way, you won't have a clear picture of what's going on around you. This, in turn, may affect your ability to manage effectively and meet your group goals.

Consider implementing the following measures to loosen any tension you may experience between your role as evaluator and coach:

- Conduct coaching and performance evaluating as separate processes.
- Reassure coachees that frank discussions with you about mistakes or shortcomings won't result in a poor performance evaluation.
- Use performance evaluations to identify problems that may improve with coaching—but reaffirm to the employee that coaching is a process distinct from performance evaluation.

As a coach, your job is to find ways for others to improve and grow. However, as a manager, you are also an evaluator, with the job of reviewing and assessing worker performance. How do you balance these two responsibilities?

Create an atmosphere of trust

Another way to manage the dual roles of evaluator and coach is to create an atmosphere of trust. Employees seek help, learn best from, and open up to managers who show interest in their long-term development and who provide both support and autonomy. Trust makes coaching possible, and the act of coaching itself increases trust.

Your coachees will be more likely to trust you if you have expertise in the matter that they are being coached on, demonstrate concern for their well-being and success, show empathy for their situation, fulfill promises that you've made, and respect confidentiality if they desire it.

In addition, you create a positive climate by ensuring accountability for the results of coaching and making that accountability explicit.

For example, "I agree to help you develop your selling skills. You agree to learn and apply them to produce higher sales."

Also express accountability in measurable terms whenever possible—such as "number of sales contacts made each day."

Finally, coaching paired with motivation-to-learn is a powerful combination. Common workplace motivations that encourage people to master new skills or improve performance include: opportunities for advancement, salary increases and bonuses, job security, peer pressure to perform at one's best, and opportunities to take on more challenging work.

In short, the more trust, accountability, and motivation you can establish, the more effective your coaching will be.

Avoid common coaching mistakes

Simply avoiding common mistakes can improve your coaching. The table below shows typical coaching mistakes and remedies.

Common Coaching Mistakes and Remedies

Mistake	Remedy
Talking too much	Resist the urge to talk, tell, and direct in the early stages of coaching. When you do talk, focus on asking probing questions to generate needed information; for example, "How are you spending your time?" or "What is holding you back?"
Failing to listen actively	While listening to your coachee, put all other thoughts out of your head. Focus on what the person is saying, and suspend the urge to evaluate or pass judgment. If necessary, take notes to capture key comments or concerns.
Losing control of emotions	If you're having a bad day or are upset about something, do <i>not</i> engage in coaching sessions or conversations. Wait until your feelings of frustration or

	annoyance have passed.
Failing to prepare the coachee emotionally for new challenges	If your coachee lacks the self-confidence to take on new challenges, address that problem before pushing the person to reach for higher performance standards or to try his or her hand at a difficult new skill.

Activity: How not to coach: Part 2

It is easy to make mistakes while coaching an employee. It is important to recognize these mistakes and know how to remedy them—you could end up doing more harm than good. Can you identify these coaching mistakes?

Successful coaching hinges on several key skills. Identify the skill that the manager neglected in these scenarios.

Michael manages Andrea, who handles print buying for their company's brochures. In several recently published brochures, the quality of the printing job was less than ideal. But when Michael points out the problem to Andrea, she says, "I don't know what you mean. These look fine to me." Michael decides to coach Andrea to help her improve the quality of projects she's responsible for. When he broaches the subject of coaching, pointing out that it can help employees develop new skills and grow, she looks confused and distressed.

What mistake has Michael made?

- ☐ He failed to earn Andrea's trust by demonstrating his concern for her success on the job.
Not the best choice. When Michael mentioned that coaching can help employees develop new skills and grow, he did express his concern for her success in her role.
- ☐ He caused Andrea to fear that her performance evaluations may hinge on her willingness to be coached.
Not the best choice. Michael did nothing to make Andrea think that her performance evaluations would depend on her openness to coaching.
- ☐ He should not have set out to coach Andrea, since she seemed unaware that a problem existed.
Correct choice. Since Andrea does not see any problem with the print quality, coaching is not appropriate at this point. Instead, Michael should clarify what he sees as the print quality issue and give her the opportunity to address the problem on her own.

During a meeting with her employee, Silas, Bette asks what particular skills he thinks he should work on improving. Silas pauses for a moment and then says, "Well, things really have been going well overall. I'm not sure what to specify as areas for improvement."

What mistake has Bette made?

- ☐ She failed to explain that she treats coaching and performance evaluating as separate processes.

Correct choice. If employees fear that sharing weaknesses with their coach will affect their performance evaluations, they may hesitate to bring up mistakes or shortcomings with their coach.

- ☐ She neglected to delegate coaching to someone else in Silas's group who would provide more expertise.

Not the best choice. Nothing in this scenario suggests that Bette should have delegated Silas's coaching to someone else in the group.

- ☐ She didn't create a coaching plan in advance for Silas.

Not the best choice. Bette and Silas need to reach agreement on a coaching objective before they can create a plan, and then they should create the plan together.

Brian, a former individual contributor, has recently been promoted to manager of a 10-person department. He has asked Ming, one of his employees, to lead a team he has assembled to manage a special project. Ming has never been a team leader before, so Brian suggests that he coach her to help her strengthen her team leadership skills. Ming agrees to the coaching but doesn't seem to participate actively during the sessions.

What mistake has Brian made?

- ☐ He led Ming to think that progress toward her coaching goals would influence her end-of-year pay increase.

Not the best choice. Nothing in this scenario suggests that Brian implied to Ming that her response to coaching would affect her performance evaluations.

- ☐ He failed to earn Ming's trust because he lacks expertise in management himself.

Correct choice. Coachees are more likely to trust their coach and therefore participate actively in coaching sessions if the coach has expertise in the subject area in question—in this case, team leadership skills. In this scenario, Brian is a new manager himself. He might have assigned Ming a different coach—one who does have experience as a team leader or manager.

- ☐ He didn't fulfill promises he had made to Ming about how their coaching relationship would work.

Not the best choice. Nothing in this scenario suggests that Brian didn't fulfill commitments he had made to Ming about when they would meet for coaching sessions or how the coaching would be carried out.

Practice your coaching skills



Like any other skill, coaching becomes more effective with constant practice. Look for opportunities to apply your coaching skills—with your direct reports, with members of a team you're participating in, and with peers who would welcome and benefit from your help.

Also practice coaching in the moment. Not every coaching session must be planned. If you spot an opportunity to help an employee, grab it. Fast, on-the-spot coaching is often very effective. By catching a problem in the making, you'll not only hone your abilities as a coach; you'll also prevent the problem from growing.

Overview

This section provides interactive exercises so you can practice what you've learned. These exercises are self-checks only; your answers will not be used to evaluate your performance in the topic.

Scenario

Assume the role of a manager in a fictional situation and explore different outcomes based on your choices (5-10 minutes).

Check Your Knowledge

Assess your understanding of key points by completing a 10-question quiz (10 minutes).

Scenario: Part 1

Part 1

Marie's sales group has ambitious goals in challenging times. Under intense pressure to make this quarter's numbers, members of the group have proposed creative measures to close their sales—adding whatever "extra" is needed to sweeten each deal.

A certain amount of tension between sales and the post-sales implementation group goes with the territory. But lately, the tension has escalated. The implementation manager recently brought the matter to Marie's attention. She mentioned that one salesperson in particular, Larry,

seems to generate many surprises for implementation—tacking on extra implementation days, nonstandard reports, and extensive customization requests.

Marie suspects that she may have a direct report in need of coaching—and contemplates how she should proceed.

What would you advise Marie to do next?

- [Bring the matter to Larry's attention at an upcoming quarterly performance review.](#)

Not the best choice.

Coaching should not be confused with formal quarterly or annual performance reviews. Rather, coaching is an ongoing process that takes place as the need or opportunity arises. A manager needs to separate the dual roles of coaching and evaluating direct reports. A performance review, with its purpose of evaluating goals and expectations, is not usually the best time for dealing with coaching issues.

- [Look for informal opportunities to coach Larry during daily interactions in the coming week.](#)

Not the best choice.

Though informal coaching can be helpful during a manager's day-to-day interactions with direct reports, managers should address urgent coaching issues proactively by preparing for and scheduling a coaching session.

- [Review Larry's deals and observe his interactions with the implementation group.](#)

Correct choice.

Before coaching a direct report, a manager should take the time to prepare. Reviewing the individual's work and observing the person in action helps the manager better analyze and understand a coaching issue. This important step prepares a manager to clearly describe the issue to the direct report during a coaching session.

Scenario: Part 2

Part 2

Marie takes the time to review Larry's deals and observe his interactions with the implementation group. She sees that Larry has promised a lot of extras to customers—but nothing that Marie finds unreasonable. In fact, she's impressed with Larry's creativity, as well as his sales record. At a joint meeting of the sales and implementation groups, Marie observes polite frustration on the part of the implementation group—and a touch of impatience on Larry's part as he defends his promised extras.

With a clearer understanding of the situation, Marie is now ready to schedule a coaching meeting with Larry. When they meet, Marie starts by explaining the purpose of the meeting. Next, she wants to give Larry some feedback.

What feedback would you advise Marie to give Larry?

- "Larry, tension between sales and implementation is not new. It goes with the territory. But implementation appears pretty frustrated, and you need to be more sensitive to their needs."

Not the best choice.

This feedback is general and vague. Effective feedback is clear and specific. A manager should describe the impact that an individual's behavior has on coworkers and on their ability to meet their goals, making sure to deliver this feedback in a neutral manner.

- "Larry, at the recent meeting, I observed frustration on the part of implementation. When you add an extra to a standard package, it may close the sale. But it also has an impact on implementation. It increases their workload and affects their schedule."

Correct choice.

A manager should neutrally describe the impact a person's behavior has on his or her coworkers and on their ability to meet their goals. This description should be clear, specific, and nonjudgmental.

A manager should also consider how he or she might be contributing to a coaching issue. For example, ask yourself if you have unrealistic expectations of your direct report, or whether your own feelings are clouding your ability to observe and analyze a situation clearly and fairly.

- "Larry, I reviewed your recent sales. I'm really impressed with your creativity—and your numbers. No problems there. But I think you might present implementation with fewer surprises."

Not the best choice.

While positive feedback is important, a manager shouldn't minimize the importance of the issue at hand. Rather, he or she

should present a clear description of the specific problem, showing how the direct report's behavior affects his or her coworkers and their ability to meet their goals.

Scenario: Part 3

Part 3

Let's listen in on Marie's conversation with Larry.

Marie: When you add an extra to a standard package, it may close the sale. But it also has an impact on implementation. It increases their workload and affects their schedule.

Larry: Well, I did notice their frustration. But it's frustrating for me, too. I mean...if I didn't make the sale, they wouldn't have anything to implement!

Marie: True. But it isn't necessarily an either/or situation. Either no sale—or a sale with a surprise attached, which creates unexpected, extra work for them.

Larry: I see. You mean a sale—but without the surprise.

Marie: Right. Fewer surprises. And more expectation-setting.

Larry: But still do what it takes to close the sale?

Marie: Oh yes, Larry. *Close* the sale.

Marie has helped Larry understand the issue. What should Marie say next?

- "What do you think would help the implementation group feel less frustrated?"

Correct choice.

During a coaching discussion, a manager wants to build a shared agreement with a direct report about a desired outcome. Often it's best for a manager to begin by asking an open question that invites the direct report to give his or her perspective and perhaps propose a solution. This can deepen the manager's understanding of the situation. And direct reports will more likely be committed to solutions that they propose.

- "You need to offer a customer what it takes to close the sale, but without surprising the Implementation group."

Not the best choice.

Marie has already established what the problem is. Now it's time to begin building a shared agreement with Larry about a desired outcome. To do this, a manager should balance inquiry (asking questions) and advocacy (stating a viewpoint). In this situation, Marie might begin by focusing on inquiry—and ask Larry for his perspective and ideas.

- "I think you need to start communicating with Implementation more—and earlier. You know, start setting expectations the minute you close a sale."

Not the best choice.

During a coaching discussion, a manager wants to build a shared agreement about a desired outcome, using a balance of inquiry and advocacy. In this situation, Marie might begin by focusing on inquiry and inviting Larry's perspective *before* offering her own impressions. She should then add her ideas and advice—in a neutral manner that enables Larry to understand her viewpoint and consider its value.

Scenario: Conclusion

Conclusion

Marie: What do you think would help the implementation group?

Larry: Not adding any extras to the standard package...

Marie: ...and lose the sale?

Larry: No. Well, let them know ahead what's coming, so they can plan.

Marie: Right. Set expectations. Early. You might involve implementation—tell them what you're thinking of offering...

Larry: ...and lose the sale?

Marie: Larry, would they ever say, "Don't offer that"—if it meant losing the sale?

Larry: No. But they *would* feel more involved...

Marie: ...and appreciate how their work contributes to a sale. They might have good ideas about how to improve your offer and set customer expectations.

Narrator: Marie has observed and analyzed the situation, described the problem in terms of Larry's impact on others, probed for suggestions, and finally offered advice. These steps can help a manager coach an individual and build a shared agreement about a desired result.

Activity: Check Your Knowledge: Question 1

You've been observing an employee in order to better understand his unproductive behavior. You want to estimate the probability that coaching will lead to improvement in his case. Which of the following would *most* suggest that coaching would lead to improvement of this person's performance?

- The unproductive behavior occurs in a wide variety of situations.

Not the best choice.

When unproductive behavior occurs in a wide variety of situations, it most likely cannot be improved through coaching. Coaching works only when the coachee willingly agrees to participate and when the behavioral or performance problem in question is solvable (e.g., it manifests itself infrequently and only in certain situations).

- The person is willing to participate in a coaching process.

Correct choice.

Coaching works only when the coachee willingly agrees to participate and when the behavioral or performance problem in question is solvable (e.g., it manifests itself infrequently and only in certain situations).

- The problem behavior manifests itself frequently.

Not the best choice.

When unproductive behavior manifests itself frequently, it most likely cannot be improved through coaching. Coaching works only when the coachee willingly agrees to participate and when the behavioral or performance problem in question is solvable (e.g., It manifests itself infrequently and only in certain situations).

Check Your Knowledge: Question 2

Because coaching is based on mutual agreement, it is not always an appropriate strategy. Which of the following situations requires direct intervention, rather than coaching?

- While giving a report at a meeting, one of your direct reports seems nervous about delivering bad news.

Not the best choice.

This situation does not require direct intervention, because it doesn't involve a staff member who's clearly violating company policy or values. Instead, an employee is nervous about delivering bad news during a meeting. The situation in which you overhear a direct report promising a customer something that isn't available *would* require direct intervention, because it violates company policy.

- A customer you have previously worked with tells you that your direct report has made some irritating comments.

Not the best choice.

This situation does not require direct intervention, because it doesn't involve a staff member who's clearly violating company policy or values. Instead, an employee has made some comments that a customer finds irritating. The situation in which you overhear a direct report promising a customer something that isn't available *would* require direct intervention, because it violates company policy.

- You overhear a direct report promising a customer something that is not available.

Correct choice.

Direct intervention *is* appropriate when someone clearly violates company policy or organizational values. Promising a customer something that isn't available is a violation of company policy.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 3

When should coaching take place?

- As the need arises

Correct choice.

Unlike goal-setting and performance reviews, which are scheduled quarterly or yearly, effective coaching is ongoing. Sometimes coaching focuses on specific situations. Often, however, coaching is informal and happens on the go as you interact with direct reports and peers—in person, by phone, or even through e-mail.

- Formally, yearly; informally, quarterly

Not the best choice.

Unlike goal-setting and performance reviews, which many managers conduct formally every year and informally every quarter, effective coaching is ongoing. Often effective coaching happens informally and is not scheduled for any particular time.

- At least once a quarter

Not the best choice.

Unlike goal-setting and performance reviews, which many managers conduct on a formal schedule, effective coaching is ongoing. Often effective coaching happens informally and is not scheduled for any particular time.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 4

When is it more appropriate to use an open-ended question rather than a closed question during a coaching session?

- When you are focusing on the other person's response, or confirming what has been said.

Not the best choice.

When you want to focus on the other person's response or confirm what has been said, you would use a closed question (which leads to a "yes" or "no" answer). An open-ended question is more appropriate for exploring alternatives or uncovering the employee's attitudes or needs.

- When you are exploring alternatives or uncovering the employee's attitudes or needs.

Correct choice.

Open-ended questions invite participation and idea sharing, while closed questions lead to "yes" or "no" answers. When you want to find out more about another person's motivations and feelings, use open-ended questions. The responses will give you more information to understand the employee's perspective.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 5

As a manager, you have only so much time and energy to devote to all your managerial responsibilities—including coaching. Which of the following practices will *not* help you make the most of your coaching time?

- Pointing out behavior to employees who are not aware that they have a performance problem.

Not the best choice.

Pointing out behavior to employees who are not aware that they have a performance problem *will* help you make the most of your coaching time. For example, if you have a direct report who doesn't realize that he or she has a performance problem, it might make more sense to raise the issue with the person and then give him or her an opportunity to address it independently.

- Focusing your coaching on as many employees who need it.

Correct choice.

Coaching as many employees as possible is *not* a good practice for making the most of your coaching time. Since your time is limited, it makes better sense to invest it in coaching opportunities that will deliver the highest return. These generally arise when a new subordinate needs direction, a direct report is almost ready for new responsibilities and needs a bit more help, or a problem performer who can be brought up to an acceptable level of work with some timely guidance.

- Delegating coaching when possible.

Not the best choice.

Delegating coaching when possible *is* a good way to make the most of your coaching time. For example, if a direct report needs to acquire a new skill, it might be more effective and efficient to delegate the coaching assignment to someone in your group or organization who has expertise in this particular skill area.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 6

What might happen if you rely only on asking questions during a coaching session?

- The other person may begin to withhold important information and perspectives.

Correct choice.

If you rely only on asking questions, your coachee may start feeling interrogated. As a result, he or she may begin withholding important information and perspectives. Instead, incorporate advocacy into your session, offering some of your own ideas and advice in such a way that the coachee can hear your ideas, respond to them, and consider their value.

- You will find it easier to offer your own ideas later on.

Not the best choice.

Relying only on asking questions will make it harder, not easier, for you to offer your own ideas—which are also important to present during a coaching session. Instead, strive for a balance of inquiry and advocacy.

- You may stimulate a richer exploration of alternative solution.

Not the best choice.

Relying too much on asking questions will discourage, rather than stimulate, a rich exploration of alternative solutions—which are also important to present during a coaching session. Instead, strive for a balance of inquiry and advocacy.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 7

During the coaching process, when should you give feedback?

- Only after you and your coachee have exchanged your perspectives on a situation

Not the best choice.

Waiting until you and your coachee have exchanged your perspectives on a situation is not the ideal time for you to give feedback. Instead, it would be more effective for you to give feedback early and often during the coaching process. Frequent feedback delivered soon after the fact is more effective than infrequent feedback.

- At the end of each coaching session

Not the best choice.

Waiting until you and your coachee have reached the end of a coaching session is not the ideal time for you to give feedback. Instead, it would be more effective for you to give feedback early

and often in the coaching process. Frequent feedback delivered soon after the fact is more effective than infrequent feedback.

- On a regular basis

Correct choice.

The best coaches give feedback early and often in the coaching process. Frequent feedback delivered soon after the fact is more effective than infrequent feedback.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 8

You want to provide contacts for an employee seeking to solve a problem, as well as help build the person's confidence. Which coaching approach would you use?

- Supportive

Correct choice.

Serving as a resource and building your coachee's confidence (as well as encouraging self-directed learning and facilitating problem solving) are all appropriate reasons for using the supportive coaching approach.

- Authoritative

Not the best choice.

"Authoritative" is not a coaching approach. Instead, when you want to serve as a resource or help build a coachee's confidence, it's best to use the supportive coaching approach.

- Directive

Not the best choice.

The directive approach is used for developing an employee's skills, providing answers, and instructing. When you want to serve as a resource or help build a coachee's confidence, it's best to use the supportive coaching approach.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 9

As part of preparing to coach, you observe your direct report's behavior and form hypotheses about what you're seeing. Which of the following questions will help you assess whether you may be contributing to your direct report's poor performance?

- "Does this employee have the necessary skills to perform the job requirements?"

Not the best choice.

Lack of skills may indeed contribute to employee's problem behaviors. However, this question does not examine how your own behavior and expectations may contribute to the performance problem.

Many managers find it difficult to identify with an employee who's having a performance problem. If you have this difficulty, you may feel anger or frustration toward the employee. And if the person senses your emotions, he or she may become upset—which can in turn make it difficult to perform well on the job.

- "Have I praised this person's performance too much in the past?"

Not the best choice.

Sincere praise helps employees build self-confidence and often motivates them to excel. It is unlikely that praising an employee for things that he or she does well will result in poor performance in other areas.

Many managers find it difficult to identify with an employee who's having a performance problem. If you have this difficulty, you may feel anger or frustration toward the employee. And if the person senses your emotions, he or she may become upset—which can in turn make it difficult to perform well on the job.

- "Have I failed to identify with the person who's having a performance problem?"

Correct choice.

Many managers find it difficult to identify with an employee who's having a performance problem. If you have this difficulty, you may feel anger or frustration toward the employee. And if the person senses your emotions, he or she may become upset—which can in turn make it difficult to perform well on the job.

Check Your Knowledge: Question 10

Effective coaching includes follow-up, whereby you assess your employee's progress and identify ways to improve the coaching process. Which of the following is an effective practice for following up?

- Set a date for a follow-up discussion at the conclusion of the series of coaching sessions you've scheduled with your employee

Not the best choice.

Setting a date for a follow-up discussion at the conclusion of the series of coaching sessions is not an effective way to follow up. Instead, you should conduct follow-up discussions throughout the coaching process—by continuing to observe the person's behavior and performance and asking what he or she needs from you to improve steadily. This can help you assess whether the unproductive behavior has improved or worsened over time.

- Continue observing the person's behavior and performance, asking what he or she needs from you to improve steadily

Correct choice.

If you're striving to correct an unproductive behavior, continued observation and questioning can help you assess whether the behavior has improved or worsened over time. This process can also help you generate ideas for helping the person stay on a track of steady improvement in the future.

- Switch from active listening to advocacy once the employee has demonstrated progress toward his or her goals

Not the best choice.

Switching from active listening to advocacy once the employee has demonstrated progress toward his or her goals is not an effective way to follow up. Instead, you need to conduct follow-up discussions throughout the coaching process—by continuing to observe the person's behavior and performance and asking what he or she needs from you to improve steadily. This can help you assess whether the unproductive behavior has improved or worsened over time.

Check Your Knowledge: Results

Your score:

Steps for coaching

1. **Prepare.** Observe your potential coachee, test your hypotheses about his or her skills or performance, estimate the probability of improvement, and ask the employee to prepare for coaching.
2. **Discuss skills and performance.** Share your observations with the potential coachee, ask questions and listen actively to his or her responses, and explore potential causes of the performance problem or the need for new skills.
3. **Coach.** Obtain agreement on goals, conduct coaching sessions, customize your approach, blend inquiry and advocacy, give feedback, and create action plans.
4. **Follow up.** In this final step of coaching, you regularly discuss what's working well and what isn't, and make any needed adjustments in the goals or the coaching process.

Steps for reaching agreement

1. **Inquire** into and advocate different perspectives.

Throughout the coaching process, you and your coachee need to agree on goals, create plans for achieving them, and make any changes necessary to improve the coaching process. A blend of inquiry and advocacy can help.

For example, "Julie, I'd really like to see you build the skills you need to take leadership of the product development team. Based on what I've observed, and what you've told me, learning to delegate would be a major challenge for you as a new manager. What do *you* see as the most important focus for our coaching sessions?"

2. **Present** proposals.

Offer your ideas for conducting the coaching process or helping your employee achieve his or her goals.

For instance, "Julie, I think that talking with several experienced managers about delegating could be very helpful."

3. **Check** for understanding.

Ask questions to assess your employee's understanding of what you're proposing.

"Julie, what is your understanding of the delegating process? In your view, how will we measure your progress with this skill?"

4. **Check** for agreement.

Ask questions to check whether you and your coachee are in agreement.

"Julie, do we agree, then, that our coaching should focus on delegating skills rather than another aspect of management?"

5. **Revisit** step 1 when agreement is in question and begin the process again.

If you check for agreement and the employee's response indicates lack of agreement, begin blending inquiry with advocacy again. The following dialogue provides an example:

Coach: "Julie, do we agree that we'll review your progress on delegating in two months, and that we'll measure your progress according to whether you've met your goal of delegating four projects to team members?"

Julie: "I'm a little nervous about having just two months. I've got another big deadline that will hit midway through that timeframe, and I'm not sure I can handle the coaching assignment at the same time."

Coach: "I think it's important to review your progress on the delegating assignment promptly, and I'm worried that waiting longer than two months may make it harder for you to learn this skill. Do you share my concern? If so, let's explore ideas for sticking with that timetable."

Julie: "If the two-month review is crucial, maybe I could reduce the number of delegated projects to three instead of four. That might be more manageable."

Coach: "That sounds like a good idea. So, we'll agree to review your progress two months from today to see whether you've been able to delegate three tasks to your team?"

Julie: "Yes, let's move ahead with that understanding."

Steps for balancing inquiry and advocacy

1. **Describe the individual's situation in a neutral way based on your observations.**

To balance inquiry (asking questions) with advocacy (presenting your ideas or opinions) during the coaching session, start by referring to the observations you gathered during the preparation stage of coaching.

For example, "Martin, thank you for generating so many reports for the executive committee over these last few months. You really accomplished a lot under extreme time pressure. I think your reports could be much more useful to the committee, though, if you learn how to format them in a more effective way. I've noticed that the five reports you created lack an executive summary, as well as headings to indicate the flow of information."

2. State your opinion—your interpretation of what you have observed.

After presenting your observations, offer your views of what you've observed.

For instance, "Martin, when reports lack certain features, such as a summary and headings, executives find it harder to read and absorb the information."

3. Make the thoughts behind your opinion explicit.

Explain what assumptions or line of reasoning led to your opinion:

"Martin, most of the executives on the committee are eager to get through the material as quickly and efficiently as possible. That's why I'm thinking it would be good for you to learn how to format your reports in ways that make the reading easier for your audience."

4. Share your own experiences if they might help.

Sometimes describing your own experiences can help explain the reasoning behind your opinion or idea.

For example, "Martin, I've discovered that when technical reports begin with a summary and contain headings throughout, it takes me about half the time to read them as it does to get through unformatted reports."

5. Encourage the other person to provide his or her perspective.

To balance advocacy with inquiry, ask questions that invite your coachee to provide his or her perspective:

"Martin, do you agree that it's important for you to learn how to write more effective reports? If so, what steps do you think we need to take to help you achieve this goal? How would you like to measure your progress?"

Tips for when to coach

- Coach employees who are aware of a performance problem or skill gap and who are motivated to address the situation.
- Don't expect to solve a problem in a single coaching session. Coaching is an ongoing process.
- Coach informally "on-the-spot" as you overhear a conversation or observe a specific behavior that indicates a potential performance problem or skill gap.
- Offer coaching if you see a need—but first explain what you've observed and why you think coaching would be valuable.
- Don't try to force coaching on someone who doesn't want to improve or who isn't aware that he or she has a performance problem.
- Avoid coaching if unproductive behavior is deeply rooted and occurs across a broad range of situations. Such problems usually don't clear up with coaching.

- Find opportunities to strengthen *your* coaching skills. Regular practice improves a coach's effectiveness.

Tips for effective coaching

- Create an atmosphere of trust. Trust makes coaching possible, and the act of coaching strengthens trust.
- Keep the coaching focused to one or two goals that will help the employee improve performance or close a skill gap.
- Cultivate a comfortable setting during coaching sessions. Make sure you will not be interrupted. Set a positive tone, and communicate genuine support for the person's development.
- Establish ground rules up front. For example, what is said during a coaching session will remain confidential, and each party will agree to fulfill his or her commitments to the coaching process.
- Establish preferred work styles and a method of feedback up front. For instance, some people like to receive feedback in written form so they can process it at their own pace and refer to it during the coaching process. Others prefer to receive feedback in spoken form.
- Set mini-milestones to help your coachee build confidence and stay motivated.
- Be clear about who has promised what during the coaching process. To maintain accountability, periodically assess whether both parties have fulfilled their agreements and commitments.
- For large goals, such as acquiring a new skill, invite your coachee to create an action plan that lays out the coaching need, the goal, the steps the coachee will take to achieve the goal, ways of reviewing progress, and the role that the coach will play (for example, attending meetings to observe the coachee's behavior).

Tips for forming hypotheses

- Ask open-ended questions (those that require more than a "yes" or "no" response). They generate more valuable information than closed questions (which require a simple "yes" or "no") do.
- Spend more time listening and observing than you do talking and judging.
- Don't try to psychoanalyze your direct report based on your observations of his or her behavior. Doing so is inappropriate.
- Don't pry into an individual's personal life or make judgments about his or her character or motivations in order to interpret your observations.
- Don't use your own performance as a yardstick to measure others. Assuming that your direct reports have the same motivations or strengths as you do is unrealistic and unfair.

Tips for giving feedback

- Give feedback as soon as possible after observing performance. Wait only if doing so is necessary to gather necessary information. On the other hand, if the behavior you've observed was particularly upsetting, consider waiting until you've calmed down before providing feedback.
- Don't use feedback simply to underscore poor performance. Also provide feedback on work that is done well—you'll help your employee learn from what he or she did right.
- Focus feedback on behavior, not character or personality. Emphasizing behavior helps prevent the other person from feeling personally attacked.
- Avoid generalizations. Instead of saying, "You did a great job during the meeting," offer feedback that is more specific, such as "The graphics in your presentation really communicated the

message."

- Describe the other person's behavior and its impact on projects and/or coworkers. You'll help the person see why it's important to address problem behavior.
- Focus feedback on factors that the other person can control. Feedback on factors that he or she cannot control is not constructive.
- Keep feedback focused on issues that your employee can rework or improve in the future.
- If a troubling behavior or action was a one-time event, consider letting it go.
- Be sincere. Give feedback with the clear intent of helping the person improve.
- Give feedback as often as necessary.

Tips for receiving feedback

- Ask your direct report for specific information about how the coaching process is going. "What did I say that made you think I wasn't interested in your proposal?" or "How were my suggestions helpful to you?"
- Ask for clarification in ways that don't make your coachee defensive. "Could you give me an example?"—*not* "What do you mean, I was unreceptive to your idea?"
- Help your coachee avoid emotion-laden terms. "You said that I'm often inflexible. Give me an example of things I do that give you this sense."
- Don't be defensive. Offer justification or commentary on your actions only if asked. Tell your coachee when you've gotten all the feedback you can process.
- Thank the person for his or her feedback, positive and negative. You'll build trust and model productive behavior.

Tips for cultivating a spirit of partnership

- During coaching conversations or sessions, set your direct report at ease. Don't let the person feel that he or she is being scrutinized.
- Ask the employee, "How do you think we are doing as a unit?" You'll convey the important message that everyone has a part to play in the coaching process.
- Review the purpose of the coaching process and its positive benefits for both parties. This will psychologically prepare you and the employee for the process. It will also act as a "warm-up" for useful dialogue.
- Do whatever you can to avoid interruptions by phone calls and other intrusions. Taking a phone call during a coaching discussion sends the employee a nonverbal signal that the call has a higher priority, which is exactly the *wrong* signal.

Tips for eliciting responses from uncommunicative coachees

- Rehearse how you will respond if your coachee doesn't provide thoughtful replies to your questions during coaching discussions or sessions.
- Practice speaking slowly and taking long pauses. You'll give the other person time to formulate responses to your questions and ideas.
- Make it clear that you expect a reply—and are willing to wait for one.
- Ask open-ended questions—those requiring more than a "yes" or "no" response. They encourage more thoughtful replies than closed questions (requiring "yes" or "no") do.

Coach's self-evaluation checklist

<i>A Coach's Self-Evaluation Checklist</i>		
<i>The questions below relate to the skills and qualities needed for effective coaching. Use this tool to evaluate your own effectiveness as a coach.</i>		
Question	Yes	No
1. Do you seize learning opportunities and focus on immediate performance problems for your employees?		
2. Do you try to develop a supportive, emotional bond with your direct reports?		
3. Do you observe your direct reports' behavior?		
4. Do you form and test hypotheses about your direct reports' behavior before acting on them?		
5. Do you separate observations from judgments or assumptions?		
6. Do you listen for signals that your help is needed?		
7. Are you careful to avoid using your own performance as a yardstick to measure others?		
8. Do you prepare employees for coaching sessions in advance?		
9. Do you use open-ended questions to promote sharing of ideas and information?		
10. Do you use closed questions (those that require a "yes" or "no" response) to help focus the discussion?		
11. Do you blend inquiry (asking questions) with advocacy (offering opinions and ideas) during discussions with individuals you're coaching?		
12. Do you listen actively when someone is talking with you?		
13. Do you paraphrase or use some other method to clarify what is being said in a discussion?		
14. Are you able to discern the emotions behind your employees' words?		
15. Do you identify causes of performance problems or look for ways to close skill gaps?		
16. Do you work with the employees you are coaching to generate alternative approaches or solutions that you can consider together?		
17. Do you work with your direct reports to reach agreement on desired goals and outcomes?		
18. Do you set a positive tone during coaching sessions?		
19. Do you demonstrate sincerity in wanting to help your direct reports?		
20. Do you customize your coaching approach depending on the person you are coaching?		
21. Do you give specific feedback?		
22. Do you give timely feedback?		
23. Do you give feedback that focuses on behavior and its consequences (rather than on vague judgments)?		
24. Do you give positive as well as negative feedback?		
25. Do you always follow up on a coaching discussion to make sure progress is proceeding as planned?		
TOTALS		
<i>If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, you are probably an effective coach. If you answered "no" to some or many of these questions, you may want to consider how you can further develop your coaching skills.</i>		

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Coach's planning form

<i>The Coach's Planning Form</i>	
<i>Use this form to prepare for a coaching session. Take the time to specify exactly what you hope to achieve and how you intend to achieve it.</i>	
Discussion with:	Date:
Areas Where Coaching is Needed (base this on observations):	
Purpose of Coaching Session (to address a performance problem? Address a skill gap?):	
Desired Outcomes of Session:	
Why Coaching Is Important in This Situation (e.g., What is at stake? What are the consequences?):	
Potential Difficulties	Methods for Handling
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
Next Steps	
1.	
2.	
3.	

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Observation worksheet

<i>Observation Worksheet</i>		
<i>Use this worksheet to record your observations of a direct report's behavior, form hypotheses about the situation, and estimate the probability of improvement.</i>		
Part I: Observing		
In the table below, document the behavior you've observed in an employee you believe could benefit from coaching. Note the event or circumstance and dates during which you conducted the observation.		
Event or Circumstance (e.g., meeting, conversation, client presentation)	Observed Behavior (e.g., three interruptions of colleagues, one inability to answer client question)	Date
Part II: Forming and Testing Hypotheses		
Based on your observations, state a hypothesis about the kind of coaching the employee may need. For example, "Harriet needs to learn when to speak up and when to listen to what others have to say."		
Write down what you will do to test your theory. For example, will you ask a colleague to observe the employee and offer his or her interpretation of the person's behavior?		
Part III: Estimating the Probability of Improvement		
Question	Yes	No
Would the employee be willing to receive coaching to address the performance problem or skill gap that you've identified?		
Is the person's performance problem or skill gap solvable (i.e., manifests itself infrequently and only in certain situations)?		
If you answered "yes" to both questions, there is a high probability of improvement through coaching.		

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Active listening self-assessment

Active Listening Self-Assessment			
Are You an Active Listener?			
Coaches who listen actively tend to get the most out of their coaching discussions and tend to be better coaches overall. Use this self-assessment to think about how actively you listen and to identify areas for improvement. Check the box next to the number in the column that best describes your listening habits.			
While someone is talking, I:	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
Plan how I'm going to respond.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Keep eye contact with the speaker.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Take notes as appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Notice the feeling behind the words.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Find myself thinking about other things while the person is talking.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Face the person who is talking.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Watch for significant body language (expressions, gestures).	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Control fidgeting or other distracting habits.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Interrupt the speaker to make a point.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Am distracted by other demands on my time.	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Listen to the message without immediately judging or evaluating it.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Ask questions to get more information and encourage the speaker to continue.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Repeat in my own words what I've just heard to ensure understanding.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Totals for each column: _____ + _____ + _____			
Grand Total = _____			
Scoring: 49–65 = You are an active listener. 31–48 = You are a good listener with room for improvement. 13–30 = You need to focus on improving your listening skills.			
If you received a score between 13 and 48, develop a plan for strengthening your active listening skills. Write your ideas in the space below.			

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Action-planning worksheet

<i>Action-Planning Worksheet</i>			
<i>Use this worksheet to establish an action plan that is agreeable to both you and the person you are coaching. It is critical to include specific measures of success and a target review date for any actions to be completed.</i>			
Action plan for:			
Statement of the performance problem or skill gap:			
Desired outcome of the action plan:			
Action(s) to Be Taken	Measure(s) of Success	Review By	Coach's Role
Employee will refrain from interrupting colleagues during staff meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No interruptions observed during two successive meetings. - No complaints from other staff members. 	12/15	Coach will comment on progress after each meeting.
Employee will take more time to explore client's needs before matching potential products to those needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of questions asked to identify needs. - Needs clarified prior to offering potential solution. 	After two more joint client meetings	Coach will explain the company's strategy of market-driven product development.

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Coaching session evaluation

<i>Coaching Session Evaluation</i>	
<i>Use this tool after each coaching session to evaluate its effectiveness and to consider what improvements you might make for the next session.</i>	
What Worked?	What Could Be Improved?
Coaching Relationship:	Coaching Relationship:
Coaching Process:	Coaching Process:
Coaching Results:	Coaching Results:

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Why Develop Others?

“At the end of the day, you bet on people, not strategies.”

Larry Bossidy
Former CEO, AlliedSignal

In today’s global business environment, markets and regulations change quickly. Competitors constantly innovate. Technological changes are the norm.

In order to outmaneuver the competition and meet the demands of the moment, organizations must be agile. They must execute flawlessly. And they must transform themselves continuously.

Are your leaders ready?

Dr. Noel M. Tichy
Professor
University of Michigan Ross School of Business

We have now entered an era where I don’t care what industry you’re in, you need leaders who can make decisions, make judgment calls at every single level. All the way down to the interface with the customer.

If you go to a company like Google or any of the high tech companies, a lot of the innovation that Amazon does is happening right at the front line. Go ahead, try it, put it out there, we'll learn from it. That cannot happen if the senior leadership doesn't have a commitment to both develop the leadership capability, but develop the business through engaging people at all levels of the organization.

Becoming a teaching organization

I like to tell parents that they cannot delegate their responsibility to develop their children. And I think it is the same in an organization. Day in and day out the person that has the biggest impact on people in the organization is the next level above and the associates around and below. And so to build a learning organization I say is not enough. Learning could be, you know we are learning cooking, we are learning this or that, but teaching organizations, when I learned something, I have a responsibility to teach my colleagues.

So everybody takes responsibility for generating new knowledge and it is not enough to be a learner, you then have to translate it into teaching.

The Virtuous Teaching Cycle

The role of a leader is to ensure that the people who work for them and around them are better every day. There's only one way to make people better. It's to teach them, learn from them, create what I call "virtuous teaching cycles", not command and control.

A virtuous teaching cycle is teach learn, teach learn. And the leader has a responsibility for reducing the hierarchy, for having a point of view to start the discussion, but then to be responsible to hear everyone's voice, get everyone involved in a disciplined way. It is not a free for all. But it is the leader's responsibility to create that virtuous teaching cycle.

A wonderful example of virtuous teaching cycle is the program that Roger Enrico ran at Pepsi, where every one of the 10 vice presidents comes with a business project.

Roger Enrico gets smarter as result of five days with 10 vice presidents, because he's learning from them. He needs to lower the hierarchy. He needs to be open to learning. And in turn, the people participating need to be energized and empowered to come up and engage in problem solving.

Another example is at Best Buy, where every morning in the stores you would bring 20 associates or so together and they would review the profit and loss statement from the day before, what we learned from the different customer segments in our stores, what we can do to improve our performance this day. And they do that every single day. The store manager was learning mostly from the associates on the floor.

That was a virtuous teaching cycle were everybody is teaching everybody, everybody is learning and the result has been an incredible result at Best Buy.

"The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership."

- Harvey S. Firestone

Founder, Firestone Tire and Rubber Co

There are clear advantages to leader-led development.

But for many leaders, taking on teaching, coaching, and other development responsibilities can seem daunting. You might avoid taking on these roles due to lack of time, resources, or your own lack of comfort with this role.

The following tips and resources can help you impart valuable learning to your team every day.

To develop others...

- Start with a Teachable Point of View

The first requirement of being able to develop other leaders is to have what I call a teachable point of view. I often give the example of, if I ran a tennis camp and you just came to day one of the tennis camp, I better have a teachable point of view on how I teach tennis. So you are standing there looking at me and it has got four elements. One, the ideas, well how do I teach the backhand, the forehand, the serve, rules of tennis. Then if I am a good tennis coach, I have a set of values. What are the right behaviors I want, how do I want you to dress, how do I want you to behave on the tennis court.

But if that's all I have, what do I do? Show you a power point presentation and then expect you to hit 500 backhands, 500 serves, run around for eight hours. I have to have a teachable point of view on emotional energy. How do I motivate you to buy in to the ideas and values?

On one end of the spectrum it could be I threaten you with corporal punishment, the other I can give you stock options, I can make you feel good about yourself, I can help you develop as a human being, what motivates you.

And then finally, how do I make the tough judgment calls, the yes/no, decisions as the tennis coach, the ball is in, the ball is out. I don't hire consultants and set up a committee, it is yes/no. And the same with running a business, what are the products, services, distribution channels, customer segments that are going to grow top line growth and profitability of the organization.

What are the values that I want everyone in the organization to have, how do I emotionally energize thousands of people, and then how do I make the yes/no, judgments on people and on business issues. So the fundamental building block of being able to develop other leaders is to have that teachable point of view just like the tennis coach.

To develop others...

- Lead with questions

Questions are hugely important because you want to create dialogue and again, what I call a virtuous teaching cycle where the teacher learns from the students and vice versa. Which means everybody ought to be free to ask whatever is on their mind, whatever it will take to get clarity and understanding, but it is not the leader just coming in and freeform asking questions. I believe the leader has a responsibility for framing the discussion, for having as best they can a teachable point of view, they may need help from their people in flushing it out, but they need to set the stage but then it has to be a very interactive, what I call virtuous teaching cycle environment, teach learn, teach learn, teach learn.

To develop others...

- Make it part of your routine

A good example to me of an outstanding leader developing other leaders is Myrtle Potter who at the time I am commenting was Chief Operating Officer of Genentech running the commercial side of the business. And she would take time at the end of every single meeting and do some coaching of the whole team on how we could perform as a team better, and then she would often take individuals and say, could we spend 10 minutes over a cup of coffee, I want to give you some feedback and coaching on that report that you just presented on or how you are handling a particularly difficult human resource issue, but it was part of her regular routine. And I think the challenge for all of us as leaders is to make that a way of life and it is built into the

fabric of how we lead and it is not a one off event, three times a year. It is happening almost every day.

To develop others...

- Make it a priority

One of the biggest challenges in getting people kind of on this path is to overcome some of their own resistance, either fear or the way I view the world I don't have time for this, everybody can make time. Roger Enrico is CEO of Pepsi. He didn't have time to go off for a week at a time and run training sessions. He had to readjust his calendar. So it requires you to look in the mirror and say, is this important. If it is important, of course I can make the time. Then I have to get over my own anxiety on how well I can do it, but it is a commitment to get on the path that says: this is how I am going to drive my own performance and the performance of my colleagues.

To develop others...

- Learn to teach

I think the biggest mistake is to assume you are going to be good at it right off the bat. It is like learning anything else. First time you go out and try and play tennis, good luck. But you got to stay with it and you got to engage your people in helping make you better and them better. And so it is a journey you need to get on, not I am going to do it perfectly when I start out.

If you want to be a great leader who is a great teacher, it's very simple. You have got to dive into the deep end of the pool. But you've got to dive into the pool with preparation. I don't want you drowning. I want you succeeding. It is extraordinarily rewarding for most human beings to teach others. I think once you can turn that switch on, it is self perpetuating. You get a lot of reinforcement, your team is better. You perform better because your performance goes up and it becomes this virtuous teaching cycle.

Your opportunity to develop others

We've heard why developing others can drive greater business results, and how to make the most of your leader-led development efforts. The materials provided in Develop Others enable you to create personalized learning experiences for YOUR team within the flow of their daily activities. Use the guides and projects to engage your team quickly. And to explore how key concepts apply to them in the context of their priorities and goals.

The value of teaching is the performance of the organization is totally dependent on making your people smarter and more aligned every day as the world changes. In the 21st century we are not going to get by with command and control. We are going to have to get by with knowledge creation. The way you create knowledge in an organization is you create these virtuous teaching cycles where you are teaching and learning simultaneously, responding to customer demands and changes, responding to changes in the global environment. My bottom line is if you're not teaching, you're not leading.

A leader's most important role in any organization is making good judgments — well informed, wise decisions about people, strategy and crises that produce the desired outcomes. When a leader shows consistently good judgment, little else matters. When he or she shows poor judgment nothing else

matters. In addition to making their own good judgment calls, good leaders develop good judgment among their team members.

Dr. Noel M. Tichy**Professor, University of Michigan Ross School of Business**

Dr. Noel M. Tichy is Professor of Management and Organizations, and Director of the Global Business Partnership at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business. The Global Business Partnership links companies and students around the world to develop and engage business leaders to incorporate global citizenship activities, both environmental projects and human capital development, for those at the bottom of the pyramid. Previously, Noel was head of General Electric's Leadership Center at Crotonville, where he led the transformation to action learning at GE. Between 1985 and 1987, he was Manager of Management Education for GE where he directed its worldwide development efforts at Crotonville. He currently consults widely in both the private and public sectors. He is a senior partner in Action Learning Associates. Noel is author of numerous books and articles, including:

For more information about Noel Tichy, visit <http://www.noeltichy.com>.

Share an Idea

Leaders are in a unique position to recognize the ideas and tools that are most relevant and useful for their teams. If you only have a few minutes, consider sharing an idea or tool from this topic with your team or peers that is relevant and timely to their situation.

For example, consider sending one of the three recommended ideas or tools below to your team with your comments or questions on how the idea or tool can be of value to your organization. By simply sharing the item, you can easily engage others in important conversations and activities relevant to your goals and priorities.

[Tips for effective coaching](#)

[Coach's planning form](#)

[Steps for balancing inquiry and advocacy](#)

To share an idea, tip, step, or tool with your comments via e-mail, select the EMAIL link in the upper right corner of the page that contains the idea, tip, step, or tool that you wish to share.

Discussion 1: Recognizing coaching opportunities

Nurturing talent and providing opportunities for your employees to grow can be one of the most rewarding aspects of being a manager. Good coaching takes time and planning, but it provides many benefits for you, your employees, and your company. It is important to be able to recognize potential coaching opportunities and know how to achieve the coaching results you want.

Use these resources to lead a discussion with your team about recognizing coaching opportunities and identifying characteristics of effective coaching.

Download resources:

[Discussion Invitation: Recognizing coaching opportunities](#)

[Discussion Guide: Recognizing coaching opportunities](#)

[Discussion Slides: Recognizing coaching opportunities \(optional\)](#)

[Tips for Preparing for and Leading the Discussion](#)

This discussion will help your team members decide what types of situations may be addressed by coaching and what activities will lay the foundation for a successful outcome.

Working through the discussion guide can take up to 45 minutes. If you prefer a shorter 15- or 30-minute session, you may want to focus only on those concepts and activities most relevant to your situation.

Discussion 2: Choosing coaching strategies

The best coaches ask good questions and offer advice in such a way that their coachees can hear their ideas, respond to them, and consider their value. They also know when it's best to tell someone what to do and when it's best to just provide guidance. To be an effective coach, leaders must be able to tailor their coaching approaches to the individual employee and the particular development need being addressed.

Use these resources to lead a discussion with your team about choosing effective coaching strategies.

Download resources:

[Discussion Invitation: Choosing coaching strategies](#)

[Discussion Guide: Choosing coaching strategies](#)

[Discussion Slides: Choosing coaching strategies \(optional\)](#)

[Tips for Preparing for and Leading the Discussion](#)

The discussion you have with your team will help them choose coaching strategies in a manner that resonates with their employees and increases the likelihood that employees will achieve their performance goals.

Working through this discussion guide can take up to 45 minutes. If you prefer a shorter 15- or 30-minute session, you may want to focus only on those concepts and activities most relevant to your situation.

Start a Group Project

Just like any change effort, successfully incorporating new skills and behaviors into one's daily activities and habits takes time and effort. After reviewing or discussing the concepts in this topic, your direct reports will still need your support to fully apply new concepts and skills. They will need to overcome a variety of barriers including a lack of time, lack of confidence, and a fear of making mistakes. They will also need opportunities to hone their skills and break old habits. To help ensure their success, you can provide safe opportunities for individuals and your team as a whole to practice and experiment with new skills and behaviors on the job.

For example, to encourage the adoption of new norms, you can provide your team members with coaching, feedback, and additional time to complete tasks that require the use of new skills. Management approaches such as these will encourage team members to experiment with new skills until they become proficient.

Group learning projects provide another valuable technique for accelerating team members' development of new behaviors. A group learning project is an on-the-job activity aimed at providing team members with direct experience implementing their new knowledge and skills. Through a learning project, team members discover how new concepts work in the context of their situation, while

simultaneously having a direct and tangible impact on the organization.

The documents below provide steps, tips, and a template for initiating a group learning project with your team, along with two project recommendations for this topic.

Download resources:

[Tips for Initiating and Supporting a Learning Project](#)

[Learning Project Plan Template](#)

[Learning Project: Evaluate and Improve Coaching Skills](#)

[Learning Project: Prepare for Coaching](#)

Making the Most of Your Coaching Program

Andrew Park. "Making the Most of Your Coaching Program." *Harvard Management Update*, September 2007.

[Download file](#)

Summary

Coaching is increasingly popular in companies today, and for good reason: used appropriately, it can really boost performance. But in many organizations, coaching is an ad hoc endeavor with no formal process to evaluate its effectiveness or return on investment. The more precisely a company can define what it wants and expects from its coaching program, the more value the program can deliver. This article offers five important steps to make coaching the disciplined, measurable performance-improvement tool it can be.

Why Mentoring Matters in a Hypercompetitive World

Thomas J. DeLong, John J. Gabarro, and Robert J. Lees. "Why Mentoring Matters in a Hypercompetitive World." *Harvard Business Review*, January 2008.

[Download file](#)

Summary

Professional service firms (PSFs), like so many other companies, are juggling the modern challenges of global competition, increased regulation, and rapid employee turnover. In a people-oriented industry, attrition has special import. DeLong and Gabarro, of Harvard Business School, along with former Morgan Stanley and Ernst & Young executive Lees, argue that a PSF can gain a much-needed competitive edge by renewing its focus on mentoring. The authors' in-depth interviews with professionals from more than 30 PSFs have yielded four principles for firms to heed as they rediscover this lost art.

Who Can Help the CEO?

Phil Terry, Jaithirth Rao, Susan J. Ashford, and Stephen J. Socolof. "Who Can Help the CEO?" *Harvard Business Review*, April 2009.

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Summary

Eliot Robbins is the CEO of TrakVue, a spinout launched two years ago with highly ambitious financial projections. His vice president of sales has just quit after only six months, becoming the second sales VP that Eliot has lost. The company is a year behind in achieving its results, and Eliot has a board meeting coming up in just a few days. Where to turn? His old friend Amory declines to advise him and suggests executive coaching. An affable squash opponent counsels that he save himself by landing a couple of big accounts. His beloved wife offers a vaguely Zen exhortation. How can Eliot get genuine help? Three experts comment on this fictional case study: Jaithirth Rao, an IT entrepreneur and the founder of MphasiS, has experienced Eliot's difficulty himself. He calls it "the myth of the self-reliant leader." Rao cautions that colleagues' own agendas may color their advice and that executive coaches may fail to perceive the ambiguities in a situation. A formal network of peers can be powerful, he says—as can a loyal and perceptive assistant. Susan J. Ashford, a dean and a professor at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, suggests that the biggest challenge for Eliot is developing greater learning agility. He must admit his weaknesses, share his concerns with colleagues and the board, and create a company culture in which input is valued. Stephen J. Socolof, a founder and a managing partner of New Venture Partners, says that Eliot should acquire an active network of mentors and should regularly ask for help from the board, which will appreciate being kept in the loop.

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